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February 12, 2008

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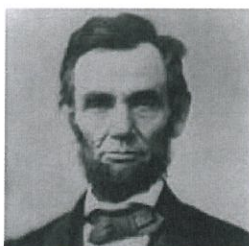
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Abe's Day



Please note that City Hall will be closed today due to Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Our City Council meeting will be held at 8:00 pm tomorrow night instead, same bat time, same bat channel (78).

To see a copy of the agenda, click [here](#).

I am celebrating by heading over to Yonkers High School Arena to see their Yonkers History Day projects. (See story below.)

Lincoln is by far one of my favorite presidents. Not only is he noted for his lasting influence on politics, including a redefinition of republicanism, he is also known for abolishing slavery by issuing his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863; leading the defeat of the secessionist Confederate States of America in the American Civil War; and promoting passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865.

But to summarize his important and influential life by these accomplishments alone does not do justice to the man he was.

He had an innate ability to rally public opinion through his rhetoric and speeches. His Gettysburg Address is but one example of this.

This is where I like to take a page in history, noting that some of the words he said then still hold true today.

Read this quote.

"Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed."

Even though he was talking about abolishing slavery here, he just as easily could have been talking about the Alexander Street Public Hearing on Thursday night. (See story below.) With that, I encourage people to participate in this historic development process.

I zeroed in on something else he said that made me think of the recent Ridge Hill vote court decision and what we went through as a City Council to receive vindication.

Just last week, the Appellate Division of the Second Judicial Department upheld the challenges made by Westchester County and Council Members Sandy Annabi, Dee Barbato, John Murtagh and me to the 2005 Ridge Hill vote by the previous Council. Sandy Annabi and I got the concessions that we were looking for from the developer and voted for the project, which has subsequently broken ground and is scheduled to open in 2009.

It has been a long road but one I am glad to have traveled. At the end of the day, like Lincoln said, what matters is that we will be right at the end of the day.

Here's what he said about his own leadership struggles:

"If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how - the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what's said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

Yonkers Makes History

The timing of the Yonkers Public School's National History Day exhibits could not have been better.

The theme "Conflict and Compromise in History" asks middle and high school students to investigate, analyze and present events of historical significance, even if they have never been resolved.

Students will present their projects for judging on February 11 and 13. The three top projects in each category from the Yonkers Public Schools advance to the National History Day Regional Competition in March.

Students present their projects for judging on Monday, February 11, 2008 (Grades 6-8) and Tuesday, February 13, 2008 (Grades 9-12) from 4:00 pm-7:00 pm in the Yonkers High School Arena, 150 Rockland Avenue in Yonkers.

Projects for Yonkers History Day include documentaries, exhibits, papers, performances and websites, prepared by individuals or small groups of two to five students. Students conduct research in libraries, archives, museums, oral history interviews and visit historical sites.



This event is the culmination of months of hard work by students that could earn them the honor of advancing to regional, state or national competitions.

For more information, contact 914-376-8274. The event is open to the public.

Goodbye to a Survivor



It is with great sadness that I pass along this news about California Representative Tom Lantos.

He was an inspiration to many, not only as a Holocaust survivor, but also a great supporter of human rights. He passed away yesterday at the age of 80. His presence will be greatly missed.

Elected to office in 1980, Lantos was Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and one of the country's leading champions of human rights. His commitment to this issue was forged when, as a young man, he lost nearly his entire family in the Holocaust.

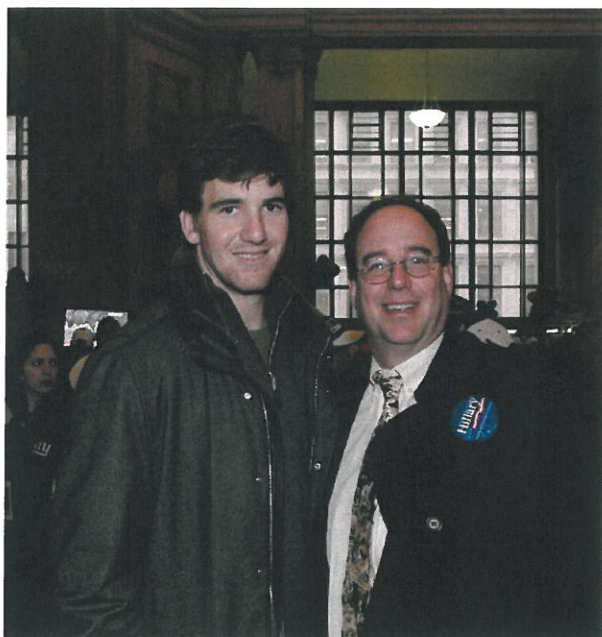
The only survivor of the Shoah ever elected to Congress, Tom Lantos was in his 14th term. His Democratic colleagues elected him chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in January 2007. He was the founding co-chairman of the 24-year-old Congressional Human Rights Caucus, which his wife Annette directed as a volunteer since its inception.

Born in Hungary, Lantos often was the first lawmaker to visit countries long vacated by United States officials. In 2004, he was among a small group of lawmakers to visit Libya, the first visit to that country by members of Congress since the 1960s.

In recent years he worked tirelessly to secure funding for people displaced by the fighting in Sudan.

"It is only in the United States that a penniless survivor of the Holocaust and a fighter in the anti-Nazi underground could have received an education, raised a family, and had the privilege of serving the last three decades of his life as a Member of Congress. I will never be able to express fully my profoundly felt gratitude to this great country," he said.

E and Me



The Super Tuesday picture of Super Bowl MVP Eli Manning and me says it all.

It was a charged day, for sure, which began with voting in Super Tuesday's primary. From there, it was down to the city for more cheering and revelry as the New York Giants paraded down the Canyon of Heroes in lower Manhattan en route to a City Hall ceremony fit for a champion.

NY Times Covers Our Efforts to Preserve Yonkers History

Views Clash Over Old Buildings in Yonkers

By DIANA MARSZALEK

Published: February 10, 2008

YONKERS: WITH at least two more old Yonkers buildings poised for redevelopment and possible demolition, local and state preservationists are beefing up efforts to save the city's historical properties before they vanish.

While such preservation efforts ramped up late last summer, after the historic home known as the Smith- Collins house was razed, preservationists say their work has grown more urgent as the fate of two other old properties, the Glenwood Power Station, on the riverfront, and the Masonic Temple, on Broadway, is being decided.

City leaders and local history buffs, as well as leaders of the Preservation League of New York State, are hoping to get the two buildings deemed historic landmarks and to see city approval of an ordinance that would require automatic review of requests to raze buildings at least 75 years old. In January, the state preservation league put the power station on its list of New York's most endangered sites.

Such efforts, however, will most likely face a stumbling block at City Hall, where a spokesman for Mayor Philip A. Amicone said the mayor would not support initiatives that put preservation before private enterprise. David Simpson, Mr. Amicone's director of communications, said that whether to save certain structures - particularly those needing expensive repairs - should be up to the private sector, not city government.

"That's not our job," Mr. Simpson said. "We need jobs and economic activity, and if preservation efforts become a roadblock, this mayor is not going to support them."

The prospect of losing Yonkers's old buildings does not sit well with individuals like Jerry Jerome, a lifelong resident of the city and a 40-year veteran of the Yonkers Historical Society.

"It's kind of sad," said Mr. Jerome, who is one of the society's vice presidents.

He said his interest in preserving the city's historic properties, including an original public bathhouse and Teutonia Hall on Buena Vista Avenue, was piqued late last month when a demolition company held a salvage sale at the Masonic Temple, which dates to 1917 and is owned by neighboring St. Joseph's Medical Center. The salvage sale raised concerns that the building is facing doom, he said.

The prospect of the loss of two bronze plaques honoring Yonkers's world war veterans was particularly troubling, Mr. Jerome said. The plaques are about 5 feet by 5 feet and had hung inside the temple on the first and second floors for decades, Mr. Jerome said.

The sale was halted after one day by the demolition company because of insurance issues. Michael J. Spicer, St. Joseph's president and chief executive, has since said the hospital has told the salvage company not to sell the plaques and instead will find them an appropriate home.

Staving off demolition of the Glenwood Power Station, which has been vacant for more than 40 years, recently re-emerged as a priority for preservationists after a proposed development of the site, which included incorporating the existing building, fell through, said Chuck Lesnick, the City Council president. Preservationists consider the power station, with its two smokestacks, to be an important remnant of early 20th century industrial

architecture.

"It's very important that we make a statement now," Mr. Lesnick said.

He said he was hoping for rapid approval of a revised proposal that would make demolition of buildings 75 years old or older subject to the city Landmarks Preservation Board's review. There is no such automatic review now.

"There is a place for shiny new buildings in our city, but they should be built in and among the historic gems that we have," Mr. Lesnick said.

But Mr. Simpson, the mayor's spokesman, said Mr. Amicone opposed the proposed demolition ordinance, saying it could stifle development, and would veto it if it is approved.

About 5,000 buildings in Yonkers are 75 years or older, but only a portion of them are actually historical properties, and about a dozen each year are slated for demolition, Mr. Lesnick said.

However, without a historical landmark designation - neither the power station, which dates to 1906, nor the Masonic Temple has one - the decision about whether a property is worth saving is up to the owner.

Mr. Spicer, the St. Joseph's president, said that while the medical center currently had no approved plan for the site, the most likely possibility includes razing the temple and replacing it with a new physicians' office building. The temple is dilapidated and deteriorating, leaving little prospect for reuse, he said.

"It would be a good use of property that right now is an eyesore to the community," Mr. Spicer said.

Similarly, there is no concrete proposal for the power station (the most recent plan called for using the structure as the base of a large condominium complex), although the building is on the market, Mr. Lesnick said. A master plan for its location does include the building's demolition, he said.

Other threatened buildings include the vacant Teutonia Hall, built in 1891; it is being eyed by developers. An original bathhouse on Yonkers Avenue, one of several built around the turn of the century to encourage public hygiene as a means of warding off disease, is also on preservationists' wish list. It currently houses a public pool.

"We don't want to homogenize the development," Mr. Lesnick said. "We want to have distinctions in our buildings."

Valentine's Day Public Hearing on Alexander Street



The public has another chance to speak out on the Alexander Street Master Plan. A second public hearing has been set for Valentine's Day, February 14 at 6:30 p.m. on the 4th floor of City Hall. If you'd rather spend Valentine's Day with a loved one, you *now* have until February 25 to write or email your comments to Department of Planning and Development, 87 Nepperhan Ave., Yonkers, NY 10701 Attn: Louis C. Kirven or Daisy Colon. Louis.kirven@yonkersny.gov daisy.colon@yonkersny.gov

SFC Submits Revised pDEIS for Downtown

A few months after the Council submitted its "completeness" comments to the developer, SFC is submitting a revised pDEIS to the Council for consideration.



While we are still waiting for the submission of the final appendices, our consultants are busy preparing for a February 19th at 7 p.m. Real Estate committee meeting to update the Council on the status and investigate whether SFC has substantially complied with the scope and our comments to recommend approval of the pDEIS as "complete" so that we can finally begin our substantive review and schedule public hearings.

While the attached Journal News article misinterpreted my answer to the question "when is the earliest possible date that the Council could approve the document as complete?" to infer that I thought it was likely that it would be approved on February 26th, I am confident that the Council will address the completeness as soon as our consultants plow through the close to 4,000 pages of resubmitted material.

To read the article, click here on [The Journal News website](#).

Mayor Amicone Celebrates Renaissance Ball



In a show of bi-partisan support for the recently re-elected Mayor, I was joined by my wife, Beth, Council member Joan Gronowski, Minority Leader Liam McLaughlin, Majority Leader Sandy Annabi, Councilwoman Patricia McDow, Councilwoman Dee Barbato and husband, Richard, as well as Counsel to the Council Minority Mark Constantine and his wife, Barbara, at the Renaissance Ball.

Yonkers Rallies Around Family in Need



Shortly after taking his wife of 26 years off life support and donating seven of her organs to those in need last week, Mario Diaz wanted to do one last thing for his wife -- bury her in their homeland of Honduras in the family plot.

What he didn't know was it would cost more than \$4800, in addition to other costs associated with her death.

"I'm here alone with my daughter now," he said through a translator. "All of our family is there in Honduras. It is for that reason that I want to take her back there."

Teresa Zavala, 45, suffered a brain aneurysm about three weeks ago.

It's a tragedy that Westchester County Legislator Jose Alvarado, D-Yonkers, was hoping Yonkers citizens would help avert through donations.

"These are people of limited means," Alvarado said in a statement last week, "a family who values hard work and respect for others. ... I am hoping people will open their hearts in (the

family's) hour of need."

He set up a donation site at Casa San Diego, 97 Yonkers Ave., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Fridays and gave out the bank address for deposits: La Iglesia Batista Chase Bank, account number 78967.

Today, Mr. Alvarado happily reported that the good people of Yonkers are sending this beautiful woman home to rest.

Note: Teresa's photo was unavailable at press time.

Mobile Shredder Comes to Town



Westchester County's Mobile Shredder is coming to Yonkers this Saturday to help protect residents from identity theft and to recycle paper.

It is also available at these locations throughout Westchester:

Feb. 9 Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. North Castle, 15 Bedford Rd., Armonk

Feb. 16 Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. City of Yonkers, 735 Saw Mill River Rd., Yonkers

Feb. 23 Saturday 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Town of New Castle, 210 Hunts Lane, Chappaqua

Feb. 24 Sunday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Depot Square, Tuckahoe

This free public service is intended for residents to shred their personal documents. Papers from businesses or commercial enterprises will not be accepted.

To speed up shredding and reduce waiting time, residents must remove all metal clips, fasteners, binders, folders and hard covers and place the papers loosely in a box. Hard covers - cardboard or plastic covers on items such as ledger books, marble composition books and hard-cover books - are not acceptable. Residents may rip away pages from these hard cover books for shredding and throw the covers in their household trash. The service will be provided rain or shine.

For more information, please call the County's Recycling Help Line at (914) 813-5420.

Written by Laura Fahrenthold

email: chuck.lesnick@yonkersny.gov

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